TRUST THE PROTEST
policia
YOUR WORD AGAINST MINE

WHY THIS ZINE EXISTS

The fundamental right to protest is being eroded not just by stigmatizing narratives, but by the blunt force of police violence and a pervasive culture of impunity. As Amnesty International's report *Under Protected and Over Restricted* highlights in Chapter 6, law enforcement agencies frequently act as judge and jury on the streets, using excessive force and disproportionate restrictions with little fear of consequence.

This is not an anomaly; it is a strategy. This zine exists as a witness to that strategy and a challenge to that impunity.

When the state sanctions violence against its people, we must become the record.

The testimonies and reflections gathered here were shared with us at protests, in community spaces, and in the aftermath of police raids. They come from the front lines of this struggle: from Rome to Lisbon, from rural France to urban Austria. They speak of trauma, of financial strain, of the strategic draining of energy from social movements, and of the fundamental injustice of a system where "your word against mine" is a rigged game. By publishing these accounts, we seek to document the human cost of police violence and to give voice to the demand for true accountability.

PALESTINE PROTESTS ROME

A powerful resurgence of protests for Palestine took place, bringing millions to the streets all over Italy. In Rome protesters spoke of police repression. Their words reveal how they navigate fear while understanding that vulnerability to state violence is not distributed equally.

REPRESSION OR NOT, THE PROTEST MUST GO ON

"This is a bit rhetorical, but since the G8 summit in Genoa (remembered for its violent repression), protests in Italy have definitely decreased, becoming more fragmented and weaker. The fact that the Palestinian movement has brought so many people back onto the streets, something we haven't seen in years, is a very strong sign that the people not only still have a voice, but also still have strength. This is what we must do: continue to exert pressure so that things actually change the way we want them to, for a better world and a free Palestine."

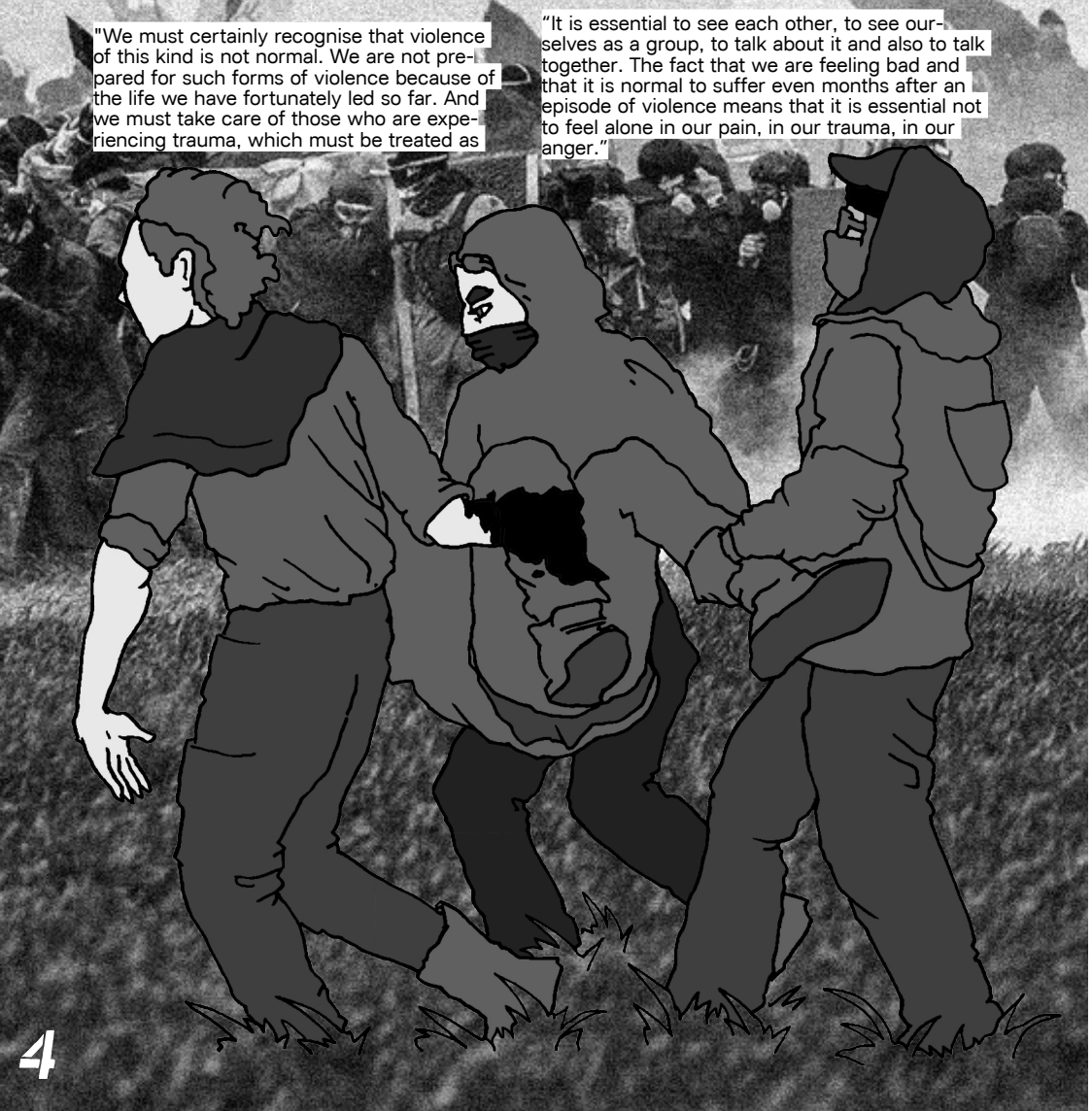
EVERYBODY CAN CHOOSE, SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE VULNERABLE THAN OTHERS

"We must have a great deal of empathy for people who are afraid to come to protests, especially at this moment in history when protesting is actually dangerous. Even if you are not doing anything wrong, as we have seen and continue to see, just sitting in the street in a square puts you at risk of being identified or reported. So I would say that (those who are afraid) can do a lot else, they can help us when we organise the logistics without coming directly to the square; but above all, I want to say to those who perhaps resent those who do not take to the streets, to be understanding towards those who do not feel up to it, because there are a million reasons why."

SAINTE SOLINE LES SOULÈVEMENTS DE LA TERRE

This is a testimony from the repression of the protest in Sainte-Soline, France, where thousands of protesters gathered to prevent the construction of enormous water basins that would dry out the marshlands, and privitize ground water. It is a reminder that the physical and psychological wounds inflicted by police are not normal, and that the path to healing lies in collective recognition and shared testimony, breaking the isolation that impunity seeks to create.

"We must certainly recognise that violence of this kind is not normal. We are not prepared for such forms of violence because of the life we have fortunately led so far. And we must take care of those who are experiencing trauma, which must be treated as such and not just as episodes of escalation. It is not normal to see the same people you pay with your taxes to protect you smashing your face or smashing the face of someone close to you. It is not normal, it is not right. It is an abominable sight to behold, and violence should not be normalised. We must not become accustomed to violence and fall into the trap of escalating violence. Violence must always be identified as such and as an abnormal episode. We must not become accustomed to violence and become more violent ourselves."



And how do you deal with that violence not being addressed?

"It is essential to see each other, to see ourselves as a group, to talk about it and also to talk together. The fact that we are feeling bad and that it is normal to suffer even months after an episode of violence means that it is essential not to feel alone in our pain, in our trauma, in our anger."

QRAVO PROTEST- LISBON, MAY 3RD

At the Qravo protest in Lisbon, we heard how repeated, illegal police raids systematically dismantle vital cultural and queer safe spaces. This is a clear case of financial and psychological warfare waged by the state, designed to wear down communities until they can no longer gather, celebrate, or resist. To resist their dissolving, hundreds of party-goers, queer community members and allies gathered to party on the streets.

"We started in 2021, and we've been doing events that are not illegal in a cultural association space. We've been raided several times in the last four years. And only in the past five months we've been raided four times. All these times the police had no mandate, no right to jump or run into our space. Even though that is not the reason why we're shutting down, that has caused a lot of emotional strain, also a lot of financial anxiety. We had events that we had to cancel and we ended up losing money. Spaces like this are quite vulnerable, not only financially, but some people that are there have traumatic histories of violence with the police. So the idea of running a space that wants to be safe is because we care about people, we really look after each other. We book a lot of people at the community, we do a lot of workshops, educational projects, harm reduction. But it's impossible to continue when we know that at any moment the police can just raid the space."

"And we've been protesting and trying to fight back because all that they've been doing is illegal. But in a way, they're winning this battle. There's been a lot of funding going into the police and funding being cut from culture and arts. So yeah, it is hard to continue when we're fighting basically a mafia paid by the state to molest and come regularly to wear us off, wear our energy off, cause anxiety."

If at the beginning people wanted to come to resist, after a while, people don't want to go into a place and be naked, be with their friends, kiss each other, maybe take drugs, which is not illegal in Portugal, if they know that it's gonna be interrupted, that they're gonna maybe be a victim of police violence. So this is what has been happening."

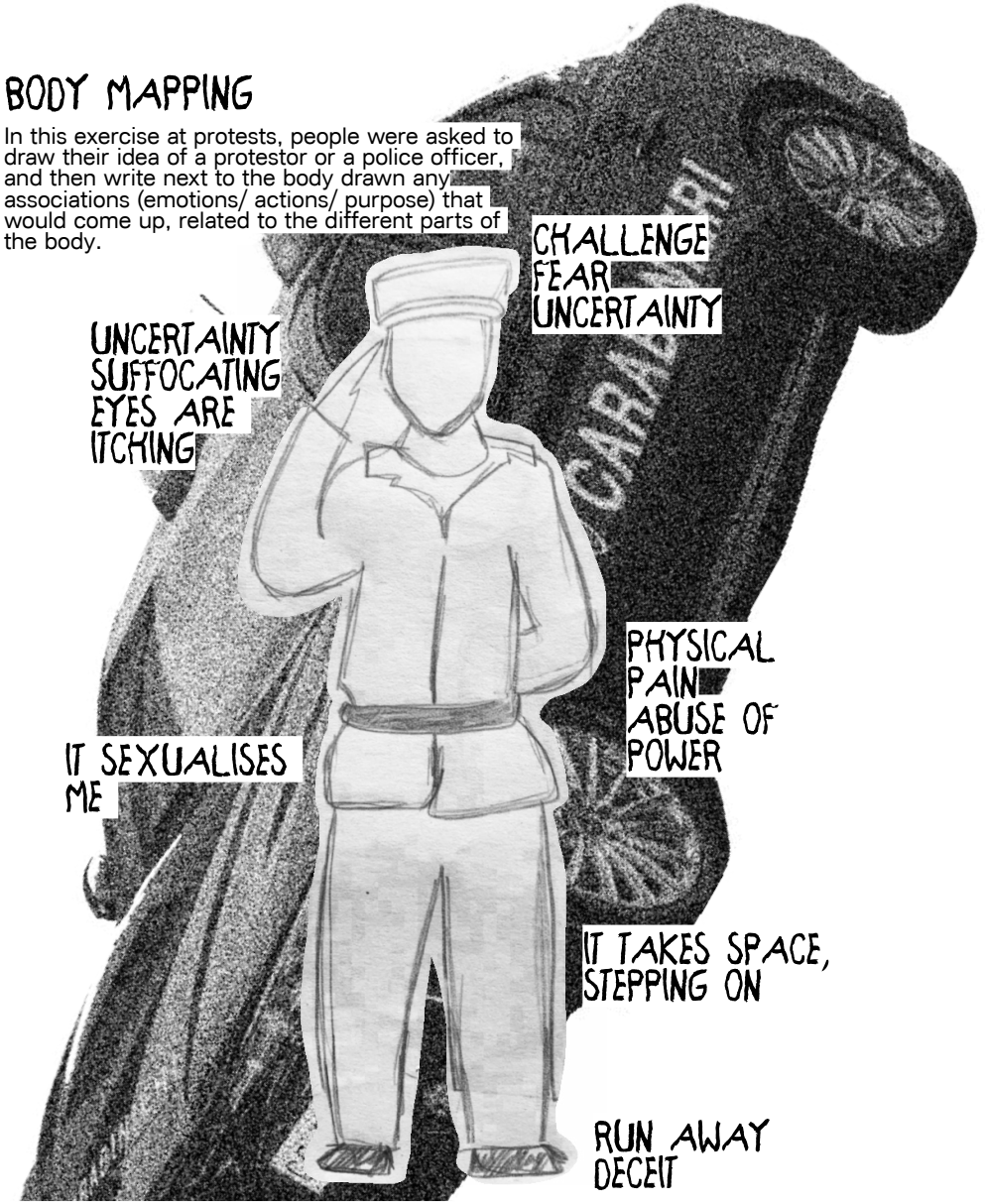
And out of these protests, out of these raids, a bunch of people started reaching out to us trying to know in which ways they could help. And that's how this whole idea of Qravo was kind of born, with people from also a bunch of other collectives. So we decided to organise this protest. I hope it's the first one of many. The objective is to continue doing this and get a crowd that can stand by you."

"I've been organising parties in Lisbon for 15 years. And this is not a new issue. It's just getting worse and worse. We've been losing venues at a very quick pace and it's just becoming impossible. That's also the reason why we ended up opening so far away from the city centre, which also poses some issues, like how do you get there? You know, people need to get in taxis. Who are the people that can pay for taxis? But at the same time, it was the only way for us to organise parties and to find an affordable space. And even there, now it's impossible. So we don't know what is happening next.[...] And I don't think we're gonna find a solution tomorrow. So I hope this becomes like a regular movement to remember everyone. Because our spaces are both vital and vulnerable."

"We are trying to make them accountable, not only by protesting on the streets, but we are trying as much to give the most attention possible to our protest. Even talking with people passing and everything else in order to make them accountable for it, to show them that we are not going to allow them to keep on oppressing us and put themselves in places that are not theirs. So we are trying our best with actions in the streets, with actions online. We are trying everything that is possible for them to just let us live our lives, live our bodies, and everything else in between."

BODY MAPPING

In this exercise at protests, people were asked to draw their idea of a protestor or a police officer, and then write next to the body drawn any associations (emotions/ actions/ purpose) that would come up, related to the different parts of the body.

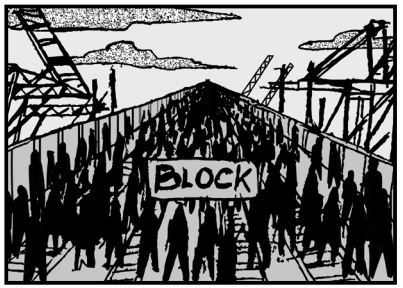


"With this drawing, the first thing that came to mind was an image of the first time I attended a protest against pension reform in France, and there was a comrade who was thrown to the ground because he had fallen during a police charge. I pulled him out, tried to lift him up, and a guard hit me very hard on the arm with his baton, leaving me with a fairly large bruise on my arm for quite some time. I remembered the whole dynamic of the march, in which we were constantly running away. And the worst thing about running away was not being able to breathe and not being able to see because they were throwing CS tear gas, an irritant gas. That's why I wrote suffocation, because they throw these tear gas canisters with their hands. People were all pressed up against the wall, so many of them, that you hurt yourself because you fall and can't move and can't even breathe anymore. That feeling of my lungs being blocked is very strong in my memories and I don't like it at all."

PROMPTS FOR PROTESTERS- WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

We invite you, readers, activists, allies, to reflect on your own experiences at protests, especially when it comes to facing police and state repression. The following questions serve as prompts, and you're encouraged to sit with them, write your own responses, and reflect with your comrades.

HOW THE MEDIA HAS PORTRAYED YOU OR OTHER PROTESTORS, AND HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO COUNTER IT?



Depends a lot on the topic of protests. As climate crisis discourse has become more accepted, so have the actions around them, more often than not also representing the protesters narratives and demands. Until the threshold of public disturbance is surpassed, from then on mainly focussed on the form of protest rather than the content. With Palestine it's very different, especially in Austria, where the reporting is mainly made up by narratives of police and Zionist organizations.

CREATE A HEADLINE - WHAT NEWSPAPER ARTICLE WOULD APPEAR ABOVE YOUR HEAD- HOW SHOULD THE MEDIA REPRESENT YOU?

"Wow, they're angry, aren't they? Why, you ask? Read here to find out!"

COME UP WITH YOUR OWN ACAB

YNAFAWT! (You're not as fast as we think)

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE POLICE AT PROTEST?

Part of the assignment, always a tingly feeling cause it is a bit fun. Ridiculous and abolishable, obviously.

WHAT DOES SAFETY MEAN TO YOU IN A PROTEST SPACE? WHO KEEPS YOU SAFE?

A tight group of comrades and being part of protests with either a clearly organized motor group who can take decision efficiently, or a mob who's ready to spontaneously erupt in unison.

HOW DOES THE KNOWLEDGE THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT MIGHT ACT WITH IMPUNITY AFFECT YOUR OWN FEELINGS OR DECISIONS ABOUT PROTESTING? DOES IT CREATE FEAR, ANGER, OR A DIFFERENT KIND OF DETERMINATION?

Fear, Frustration, Sadness, Rage.

Fonts by Gender Fail Press: Act Up Protest font,
Say Their Name, Mother Nature is a Lesbian

ShiftSlow collective
IG @shift_slow_collective